New couples’ employment models during the COVID-19 pandemic in Austria

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Background
• In Austria, couples with children mostly live according to a man full-time/woman part-time model (46% in 2019).
• The COVID-19-related restrictions resulted in an increase in the unemployment rate, short-time work (around 30% of employed in April 2020) and informal reduction in work hours.
• These changes led to a rise in couples’ employment models that rarely existed before in Austria; e.g. fathers working part-time.
• Similar studies on changes in couples’ employment during the pandemic, e.g., for Italy (Brini et al. 2021) and the UK and US (Qian and Hu 2021)

Research questions
(1) How has the distribution of couples’ employment models changed between 2019 and 2020?
(2) How have employment models changed within couples during the first lockdown in spring 2020 compared to the months before?
(3) In which couples have mothers increased/decreased their employment share/hours?

Data, measures and methods
Data: Austrian labour force survey 2019–20
• Continuous survey covering all weeks of the year
• Around 22,500 households interviewed in each quarter
• Panel data: households participate in five consecutive quarters
• Compulsory participation (around 95% response rate)
• Sample selection: couples with children below age 15

Measures and methods
• Descriptive methods, OLS regression models
• Sample selection: couples with children below age 15
• Employment models: part-time (0-35 hours), full-time (36+ hours);
• “about equal” if both part-time, both full-time or both non-working
• Dependent variable: Change in share of mothers’ working hours (in percentage points; controlled for share at Time 1)
• Independent variables on family (e.g., number of children, age of youngest child), education and employment (e.g., essential jobs, working from home)

Results

Table 1: Distribution of employment models in 2019 (in %) and changes (in percentage points) between 2019 and 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male breadwinner</th>
<th>Modernized male breadwinner</th>
<th>About equal</th>
<th>Reversed roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>He employed, she not employed</td>
<td>He full-time, she part-time</td>
<td>Both not employed; both part-time; both full-time</td>
<td>She works more hours than he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>24% -2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>28% +7</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>-10</td>
<td>20% +4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>32% +2</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>-16</td>
<td>25% +6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>28% +4</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>27% +0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>27% -2</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>30% +3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Determinants of change in share of mothers’ working hours (in percentage points); selected results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of youngest child (ref. 0-2 years)</th>
<th>Woman’s occupation (ref. clerical support workers &amp; service and sales workers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>2.86 Managers and professionals 8.43***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>5.00** Technicians and associate professionals 5.44**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-14 years</td>
<td>6.40** Skilled workers, craft workers and elementary occupations 6.21**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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References:

Data:

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